

Governor Carney Announces Statewide Contact Tracing Plan for COVID-19

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WILMINGTON, Del. – Governor John Carney on Tuesday announced that the State of Delaware entered into an agreement with the nonpartisan research institution [NORC at the University of Chicago](#) to build [Delaware's statewide contact tracing program](#) to contain COVID-19, limit Delawareans' exposure to the disease, and restart Delaware's economy.

The contact tracing program builds on Delaware's [statewide plan](#) to test up to 80,000 Delawareans monthly for COVID-19. Expanded testing and contact tracing efforts are key to reopening Delaware's economy under guidance from the White House and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

NORC also has partnered with the State of Maryland to perform contact tracing. Delaware and Maryland will share information to more effectively monitor COVID-19's spread across state lines.

Approximately 200 Delawareans will be hired as contact tracers and support staff.

Applications for contact tracers and other associated positions will be posted at de.gov/coronavirus in the coming weeks.

"To safely reopen our economy, we need to be able to quickly identify positive COVID-19 cases and reach out to those

*residents who may have been exposed. This contact tracing program brings us one step closer to returning Delaware to a new normal,” said **Governor Carney**. “We’ve been working with Maryland to coordinate our reopening efforts, and this partnership will build on that collaboration. Going forward, hiring a contact tracing workforce of Delawareans that reflects the diversity of our state will be a top priority.”*

“This is a critically important complement to the statewide testing plan the Governor announced last week and the two plans are really integrally linked,” said **DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay**. “Contact tracing is a basic public health practice for containing an epidemiological event by talking with the person who is infected and reaching out to their contacts in order to decrease transmission. It will help us track positive cases of COVID-19 and limit the spread of the virus both short-term and long-term.”

“One of our highest priorities is making sure that our workforce of contact tracers reflects the entire community we serve,” said **Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a practicing family physician**. “When positive cases of COVID-19 are identified through widespread community testing, our tracers will need to work quickly to talk with known contacts and help them self-quarantine with any necessary supports.”

“We are proud to be part of Delaware’s solution for COVID contact tracing during this critical time in the state’s history,” said **David Cotton, PhD, NORCs project director for this effort**. “We are bringing to bear our decades of experience with high volume, scientifically rigorous data collection and public health expertise to help the State and DHSS stem the tide of new infections.”

Over the next week – as the State of Delaware scales up its contact tracing operation – 100 members of the Delaware

National Guard will embed with the Division of Public Health to begin wide-scale, statewide contact tracing.

National Guardsmen and women began their training on Monday.

“I’m proud of our Delaware National Guard Citizen Soldiers and Airmen who volunteered to serve the state in this mission,” said **Major General Michael R. Berry, Adjutant General of the Delaware National Guard**. “Our Guardsmen and women live in these communities and are best positioned to assist DPH with such a critical role to help fight the spread of COVID-19 in Delaware.”

Under Delaware’s contact tracing program, Delawareans who have tested positive for COVID-19 should expect a phone call from a case investigator asking for information which includes a list of the person’s known contacts. Contact tracers will then reach out to each of those contacts to help them safely quarantine, to find alternate arrangements as necessary, and to help them get tested for COVID-19, if recommended.

Delawareans who need extra support to safely self-quarantine – such as grocery delivery or alternative housing – will be referred to a network of local community health workers. [Healthy Communities Delaware](#) will coordinate the community health worker effort, in partnership with community-based organizations.

“Healthy Communities Delaware believes that using community-based partnerships and providing necessary and life-sustaining resources and other social services supports directly to those individuals in vulnerable communities who are most impacted by COVID-19 is paramount in reducing the spread of this disease in our state,” said **Rita Landgraf, Managerial Partner for Healthy Communities Delaware, University of Delaware Partnership for Healthy Communities**.

The Delaware Department of Technology and Information will work with NORC’s technology partner, [Enovational](#), and

the [Delaware Health Information Network](#) to build a technology platform that allows the Division of Public Health to efficiently share data with contact tracers.

“Technology has played a critical role during this pandemic to gather, track, and share data,” said **Chief Information Officer James Collins of the Delaware Department of Technology and Information**. “In the hands of contact tracers, it will be an invaluable force multiplier that helps prevent the spread of COVID-19 and save lives.”

About NORC

From 2015 to 2020, NORC has conducted more than 3 million hours of telephone interviews. A significant portion of those interviews were in support of major public health-related studies such as the [National Immunization Survey](#), which NORC conducts for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the [Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey](#), which NORC conducts for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; and the [National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project](#), which NORC conducts for the National Institutes of Health.

Many of these studies involve nuanced, carefully scripted conversations about sensitive health issues, and interviewees are often members of underrepresented or difficult-to-reach demographic groups. Through these and similar studies, NORC has derived significant methodological expertise, including how best to deploy and integrate different modes of data collection and the technologies that support them.

Anyone with a question about COVID-19, whether related to medical or social service needs, should call Delaware 2-1-1. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP code to 898-211. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Questions can also be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.

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